



PUB-FR-154 00

V I S I T O R



Black River State Forest

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources ● Black River State Forest ● 910 Hwy. 54 East ● Black River Falls, WI 54615

Brief History

The Black River State Forest was established in 1957 after the Federal Government had conveyed 59,000 acres of forest land to the Wisconsin Conservation Department in 1955. Through further land purchases, the forest has grown to its present size of approximately 67,000 acres.

The area within the Black River State Forest was first subjected to logging in 1850; then it was settled by homesteaders seeking farmland. Before the logging days of the 1800's, the forest consisted primarily of white and red pine. Today the Forest consists of a mix of jack pine, oak, and aspen with an increasing component of white pine in both the understory and canopy layers.

A service building was constructed at Castle Mound Roadside Park in 1958 which complimented the existing log shelter and home built by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) workers in 1938. A loop campground with toilets soon followed along with an observation tower which replaced the fire lookout cabin on top of the mound. By 1966, attendance at the Black River State Forest exceeded 100,000 visitors annually. Today over 300,000 visitors use the forest on an annual basis.

The advent of snowmobiles brought a new type of recreation for the forest and in 1967 a 14 mile loop trail was constructed. Today more than 50 miles of snowmobile

trails link up with an extensive network of county trails.

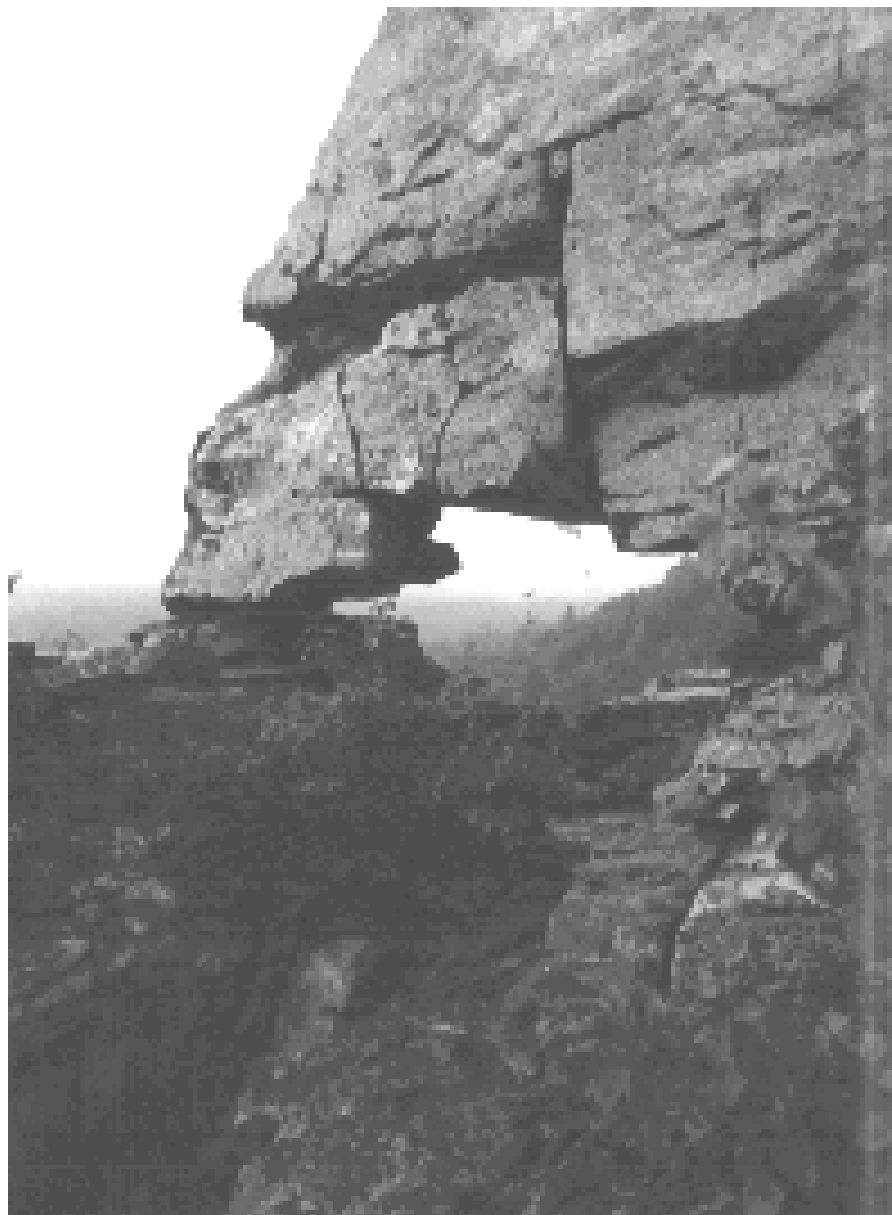
The construction of Interstate 94 contributed to the development of the Robinson Beach swimming area. The need for sandfill resulted in the digging of an 11 acre clear water pond in 1968. The water is crystal clear and the beach is over 600 feet long.

When cross-country skiing became popular in the early 1970's, a 14 mile trail was developed. Another 12 miles were added in 1981. The cross-country ski trails on the Black River State Forest are considered some of the finest in the state.

The cross-country ski trails are popular for backpacking, hiking and mountain biking during the other seasons of the year. The trails wind through rolling, sometimes steep, terrain. Many scenic vistas are located along the trail. There are also three nature trails with one located at each campground.

The forest provides excellent hunting for whitetail deer, ruffed grouse, wild turkey and squirrels. Fishing is also popular on the Black River, East Fork of the Black River and on various flowages found throughout the forest.

Logging activity can be found going on throughout the forest on a year round basis. The modern equipment is quite a contrast to the axes, sleds and horses once used in the 1800's.



Kids! Parents! Explore Together

Would you like to have some campground activities for yourself and your children and receive an environmental education lesson at the same time? As Junior Rangers and Wisconsin Explorers, you can really get into nature! The Junior Ranger program is for children K-3rd grades, while the Wisconsin Explorer program is for 4-6th graders. Here's how to get involved. Ask at the forest office or contact stations for your free Junior Ranger or Wisconsin Explorer workbook. You can complete the

workbook during your stay in the Forest. The activities are easy and fun! Once the workbook is completed, return it to any participating state park or forest to receive your certificate of achievement and a free wildlife patch for your cap or jacket. So come on! Have fun earning your patch while learning about your favorite animals.

The Forest also has a litter pick-up program whereby children can obtain litter bags at the contact station. For each bag of litter that is collected and turned in at the contact station, the children are given a token which they can use to "purchase" various nature posters.

Natural Areas

Not all areas in the Black River State Forest are intensively managed for recreation or timber management. Approximately 800 acres have been designated as State Natural Areas. The primary purpose of this designation is to preserve designated sites or areas in a natural condition with little human disturbance.

Some of the Natural Areas in the forest include white pine forest types which have the potential to become old growth forest. Some of these areas contain rare plant species.

Intensive public use of these areas is not encouraged. However, recreational uses such as hiking, nature appreciation, and educational use are allowed and encouraged.

Geology

400 million years ago this area was covered by an inland sea which left deposits of sand to depths up to 400 feet. These thick layers of sand compressed and formed into sandstone, known as Cambrian Sandstone. As the seas disappeared, due to changes in weather patterns, the sandstone was exposed to the forces of wind and rain. Much of the sandstone has eroded over the years forming broad sandy plains with sandstone remnants such as Castle, Wildcat and numerous other mounds in the area. These mounds are also called outliers.

Though the Black River State Forest is located in the driftless (non-glaciated) area of Wisconsin, glaciers had a tremendous impact in shaping the landscape as we see it today. Glaciers carried tons of rock, gravel, sand and debris as they slowly carved their way south. About 10,000 years ago when the Wisconsin Ice Age was ending weather patterns changed and the glaciers began to melt. As the glaciers receded near Wisconsin Dells, a natural dam on the Wisconsin River was created by rock and debris deposited by melting glaciers. This dam created Glacial Lake Wisconsin (located south and east of the state forest).

Glacial Lake Wisconsin and out wash from the Black River resulted in the present sandy soils, poorly drained areas and relatively flat terrain.

Hike the nature trail at Castle Mound or the ski trail at Wildcat Mound and get a close up view of a remnant sandstone mound. When you get to the top of the mound, look off in the distance and see the flat, wooded, and marshy areas to the east. OR! Hike the trail at Perry Creek and see the scenic sandstone gorge carved from years of erosion. OR! Canoe the Black River and witness for yourself the geologic features of the area along with the spectacular view. Over the years, the Black River has cut its channel down through the sandstone to expose the much older granite. This can be seen on the stretch from Hatfield south to Black River Falls.

This Paper Aims To Help You Enjoy Your Visit

The *State Park/Forest Visitor* is published by the Department of Natural Resources to help you enjoy your visit. This paper answers visitor's most commonly asked questions about the Forest. If you have other questions, ask the manager or staff at the Forest office.

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Information

Forest Superintendent
910 Hwy. 54 East
Black River Falls, WI 54615

Castle Mound Office
(715) 284-4103
DNR Service Center
(715) 284-1400

Emergency Information

Notify DNR Service Center, Castle Mound Office, or call the Sheriff's Office at (715) 284-5357.

Public phones are located in Millston, Hatfield, Black River Falls, and Castle Mound campground.

For medical assistance a hospital is located in Black River Falls.



Camping and Picnic Areas

Forest visitors can choose from three family campgrounds. All three campgrounds have nature trails, water, pit toilets, firewood and picnic facilities. All of the campsites are wooded and well screened.

Castle Mound Campground, located on Highway 12 one mile east of Black River Falls, has 35 sites, 5 of which are electrical. Castle Mound features: showers, flush toilets, handicap accessible facilities, sanitary dump station, and reserveable sites. Campsites may be reserved between May 15th and October 1st by contacting Reserve America at 1-888-947-2757 or at www.reserveamerica.com. A “must see” for Castle Mound visitors is the view from the top of Castle Mound. Follow the nature trail to the top. Castle Mound campground is open year round.

Pigeon Creek Campground, located on North Settlement Road two miles northeast of Millston, has 38 campsites. Pigeon Creek Flowage provides a nice swimming beach and fishing within walking distance of the campground. Campers can experience a more rustic outing, as electricity is not available. The five mile mountain bike trail connects you to the 20 plus miles of hiking/ski trails which are also available to mountain bikes. Campsites at Pigeon Creek are available on a first come first serve basis. Facilities are accessible to the handicap. Pigeon Creek campground is open year round. “Try a weekend of cross country skiing and winter camping.” For a truly scenic view, hike or ski (in winter) the Wildcat or Ridge Trail located north of Pigeon Creek Campground.

The East Fork Campground is located on the north end of the state forest on Campground Road. The 25 sites are well spaced with half the sites located on the banks of the East Fork River. Campsites are available on a first come first serve basis. A boat landing is located at the campground entrance. “Canoe from the campground downstream to Lake Arbutus. This stretch of river provides good walleye and small-mouth bass fishing.” Or, hike the nature trail along the bank of the East Fork River for a chance to see some of the wildlife that abounds in the state forest. Nearby Lake Arbutus offers a swimming beach and boating opportunities.

Other camping opportunities on the state forest include the following:



Horse Campground

The horse campground is located on the north end of the forest on Campground Road. Twelve sites are available on a first come first serve basis and include a picnic table, fire ring and tethering post. The campground has pit toilets and solar powered pump for water. The 35 mile horse trail begins at the horse campground. Trail passes are required. Assistance is available from the East Fork Campground attendant. Electricity is not available.



Backpack Camping

If you enjoy nature, seek solitude, and welcome the challenge of “roughing it,” you may be interested in backpack camping on the state forest. You must obtain a permit to camp out. You must

obtain a permit and must camp at least one mile away from your parked vehicle. Call or write the forest office for additional information and permits.



Group Camp

The group camp, located on the north end of the forest on Campground Road is secluded and provides peace and quiet for those looking to “get away from it all.” The group camp can accommodate a maximum of 50 people. Water, pit toilets, picnic tables, cooking grills, a dog kennel, and a large fire ring are provided.

The new indoor building at the group camp is a popular four-season facility. Twelve people can sleep comfortably, but you will need to bring a mattress pad or bed roll to cushion the wood bunks. Stove, refrigerator, gas fireplace, heated floors, and a bathroom with a shower are provided. The indoor facility is ADA compliant. Reservations are required, with a two-day minimum on summer weekends. No reservation may be submitted more than one year in advance of the date the campsite is to be occupied.



Gun Deer Season Camping

Camping outside of designated campgrounds is prohibited, except during the gun deer season. For the gun deer season, hunters must obtain a permit for off site camping on the state forest. For more information contact the state forest superintendent.



Picnic Facilities

Picnic facilities are located at the three campgrounds. All have hand pumps for water, picnic tables, grills and pit toilets. Castle Mound and Pigeon Creek have playground equipment and are handicap accessible. Perry Creek Park, Oxbow Pond and Robinson Beach provide limited picnic facilities. You are also welcome to stop at one of the flowages or any other scenic area to enjoy a picnic lunch or just to relax and take in the beauty of the forest. A log cabin picnic shelter located at Castle Mound is available for reservations. The shelter has a stone fireplace, electricity, tables and outside cooking grills.

Volunteer

Do you like to camp? Do you enjoy meeting and helping people? Do you have talent and interest you would like to share? If your answers are yes, then you may be interested in the volunteer program at the Black River State Forest.

As a volunteer, you may choose to work in any area that interests you. Examples of opportunities are: Campground Host, Trail Maintenance, Naturalist/Interpretation, Ski, Bike or Horse Trail Patrol, Visitor Information, Building and Grounds Maintenance.

For more information on the program or an application form, stop at the Castle Mound office. By mail direct your inquiry to: Superintendent, 910 Hwy. 54 East, Black River Falls, WI 54615.

Canoeing



The Black River begins in Taylor County and flows southwesterly entering the Mississippi River at LaCrosse. From Clark County to Black River Falls the river has cut its channel down through the sandstone to expose the much older granite rock. This window, called an inlier, is forty miles long and gives this portion of the river a special character that canoeists enjoy. The Black River was so named because the iron content of the water gives it a dark, black/brown stain.

Above Hatfield, from Highway 94 to Lake Arbutus, the Black River is rated expert in high water. In low water, there are many rocks and rapids.

As you travel downstream from Black River Falls, the river begins to widen and granite rock and fast water are replaced by sandbars and quieter waters. The sandbars are a perfect place to stop and rest, picnic and fish. Two canoe campsites are located south of Black River Falls at Hawk Island. Campers are limited to a one night stay.

Canoeers should be aware of the dam at Black River Falls, specifically the number of gates that may be open at the dam.

The following is a useful rule of thumb:

- No gates open at the Black River Falls dam—Safe.
- Two gates open—Average or better skill required.
- Three or more gates open—Canoeing not recommended.

The East Fork River and Morrison Creek provide good canoeing in the spring and early summer and during periods of higher water.

Canoe rentals are available locally. Due to fluctuating water levels, conditions should be checked prior to canoeing the rivers. Maps showing canoe landings and river miles are available at campground offices or the Department of Natural Resources service center in Black River Falls.

Rules and Regulations

Our state parks and forests are special areas that have been established to protect our natural heritage. Listed below are some guidelines for you to follow to enjoy your visit and comply with the rules.

1. Camping—All campers must obtain a camping permit. Camping is allowed in designated areas only. (11 p.m. is quiet time in the forest.)
2. ATVs and Snowmobiles—Operation allowed only on designated trails.
3. Fires—Fires are allowed only in fire rings or charcoal grills in State Forest intensive use areas. Fires cannot be left unattended. Make sure your fire is dead out before leaving.
4. Pets—Please clean up after your pet. No pets in buildings or picnic grounds.

This is not a complete set of rules. These rules are enforced for your safety, protection, and enjoyment.

Poison Ivy

Leaflets three — let them be.

Poison ivy is a native species that is common on the Black River State Forest. The plant has three shiny leaflets on a stem occurs as a low growing branch or vine. Contact with the leaves, white berries or twigs can cause an allergic skin reaction with an itchy, oozing rash with blisters. The rash may spread.

Wash exposed skin and clothing as soon as possible with soap and water. Rubbing alcohol and other alcohol hand soaps can also be used to remove the plant oils that cause this rash.

Mountain Bike Trails

Mountain biking has become an ever increasing source of recreation on the state forest. Forest bike trails offer a level trail for those who prefer an easier more relaxed ride, as well as intermediate trails with some hilly terrain, to difficult trails that challenge the most experienced rider. You’ll ride through scenic oak and pine forests, along creeks and to the top of Wildcat Mound for a splendid view of the surrounding forest and distant mounds. All the trails



are grass surface. Pigeon Creek Trail is 5 miles long and begins at the Pigeon Creek Campground. The Pigeon Creek Trail hooks up with the 24 miles of ski trails which are open to mountain bikes. Vehicle parking is available at the Wildcat parking lot on North Settlement Road or Smrekar parking lot on Smrekar Road.

Trail passes are required and can be purchased from campground attendants or self registration boxes at the trail parking lots or campgrounds. Please call the forest superintendent for additional information.

Bicycle Safety

- Use caution, be courteous and yield the right-of-way to hikers.
- The ski trail loops are one way. However, the links are two way. The Pigeon Creek Trail has two way traffic.
- Ride with only one person per bike.
- Do not block traffic on bridges or hills.
- Dismount to go around gates.
- Don’t ride alone and tell someone where you have gone. The trail does not have daily patrol.
- Report any damage, missing signs or damage to trail surface to forest staff.
- Lastly, have fun and happy biking.

Sphagnum Moss — A Unique Natural Resource

The large central plain area east and south of Black River Falls lies mainly in the bed of old, Glacial Lake Wisconsin. The area is dotted with a great number of marshes and bogs containing the greatest concentration of sphagnum moss found in the United States. Sphagnum moss is often confused with water moss and bull moss.

Commercial harvesting of sphagnum moss was a major enterprise in central Wisconsin throughout the 1930’s, 1940’s and 1950’s. Sphagnum moss has the ability to hold 100 times its weight in water. The water is released slowly and keeps the moss moist even in dry weather. It is because of

these qualities that sphagnum moss is favored by tree nurseries and garden stores. Tree roots are packed in wet sphagnum which ensures seedling survival and the moss is ideal for adding to potting soils.

Commercial moss harvesting is very hand labor intensive and occurs during the cool times of the day during summer. The moss is raked into piles, hauled to a drying bed where it is spread out and dried. The moss is then baled and packaged in plastics bags and delivered to commercial processors. Sphagnum moss regenerates itself naturally and can be harvested on an eight to ten year rotation.



Black River Forest Trail Foundation

The Black River Forest Trail Foundation was started in 1990 by a group of volunteers who were primarily cross-country skiers. The purpose of the foundation is to aid the Department of Natural Resources, Black River State Forest in enhancing the Black River State Forest cross-country ski trails for public use through public awareness and fund raising. Fund raising supplements tax dollars to help meet operational needs such as trail grooming and construction. The foundation expanded its goals to

include backpacking and mountain biking. The foundation has promoted activities such as Volkmarches mountain bike tours and each year sponsors two candlelight ski events. Through these fund raisers the foundation was able to donate money to the Black River State Forest towards the purchase of a snowmobile used in pulling grooming equipment. Folks that are interested in assisting or joining the foundation should contact the forest superintendent at 715-284-1406.

Special Interest—Dike 17 Wildlife Area

Within the Black River State Forest boundary lies the Dike 17 Wildlife Area. This 3,700 acre area is primarily managed for waterfowl. Each fall hundreds of ducks and geese are attracted to the area, which in turn attracts both hunter and sightseer. In addition, sandhill cranes and sharptail grouse may also be seen. The twenty flowages of the Dike 17 area were constructed by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA)

crews in the 1930s. An observation tower was also built so visitors can observe the birds and animals without disturbing them. Approximately 2,100 acres of the area are wildlife refuge. Some endangered and threatened wildlife species which can be found are the bald eagle, osprey, Eastern massasauga rattlesnake, Cooper's hawk, Blanding's turtle and the Karner Blue butterfly.

Forest Land Management

As you hike or drive through the Black River State Forest you'll notice it is a working forest. Through integrated resource management techniques, the forest is managed for a multiple of uses such as: recreation, wildlife, wood products, aesthetics, biodiversity, watershed protection and fisheries. Management of the forest for wood products has been a major use for the property dating back to the early 1950's. Wood products are a renewable, easily recyclable commodity which is "environmentally friendly". The wood products from this forest help support the second largest industry in Wisconsin and provide hundreds of people with jobs. The harvests of today are managed by foresters who practice sustainable forestry, unlike the logging which occurred in the 1800s. The Black River State Forest has a long range management plan which will insure the continuous flow of wood products for future generations.

Jack pine, oak and white pine are the major tree species found in the forest. Several harvest systems are used depending on the tree species involved. Jack pine, aspen and oak are all clear-cut because the young seedlings require full sunlight to get established. White pine, which is shade tolerant, is selectively harvested so that just enough sunlight is permitted to stimulate young seedlings and to allow the larger trees to grow in size. Whenever possible, natural regeneration of a desirable tree species is encouraged, in order to provide for the next crop. Where natural regeneration has failed or where forest areas have been devastated by fire or other disturbances, trees are planted. Ecosystem management strategies are used to guide land management activities on the Black River State Forest. Large ownerships of forest lands are combined to form eco-regions for purposes of managing biological communities rather than for an individual species.



Our Concern —Your Safety

The safety of forest visitors is a priority so please be careful at all times and please impress safety precautions on your children. Following are some precautions to keep in mind.

SWIMMING-Swim safely. Swim at a designated beach where available. None of the Forest beaches have lifeguards. Don't swim alone, at night, or in unfamiliar places. Use caution when wading in unknown waters, as water depth may change abruptly. Closely watch small children near the water.

HIKING-Hike safely. Be aware that trails vary in difficulty. Not all trails are surfaced. There may be steep climbs, descents, or stairways. Watch small children closely. Trail surfaces can become slippery when wet or covered by leaves and pine needles, or where there is loose gravel.

PLANTS-Never eat berries or plant parts unless you are certain of their identity. If you injure yourself or become ill, report to the public contact station.

Karner Blue Butterfly

Stop! Before you catch that little silvery blue butterfly, you might be capturing an endangered species. The Karner Blue Butterfly was listed as a federally "endangered species" in December of 1992. Endangered species are animals and plants that are in danger of becoming extinct. Identifying, protecting, and restoring endangered and threatened species is the primary objective of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' endangered species program. Although the Karner Blue Butterfly has almost become extinct in some of its historic locations such as the states of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Ohio; Wisconsin appears to be a stronghold for the Karner Blue. Why is the Karner Blue so readily found on the Black River State Forest? Abundant habitat accounts for this species presence. Karner Blue caterpillars feed only on the

leaves of the wild blue lupine plant. Adults feed on the nectar of the flowering plants. Prior to settlement this type of habitat was found primarily on sandy soils supporting oak savannas and pine barrens. These habitat types were promoted by natural disturbances such as wildfire and grazing by large mammals. Over the last thirty years, natural disturbances on the Black River State Forest have been duplicated by forestry practices such as timber harvesting, followed by soil scarification for tree planting and natural seeding. These practices have stimulated the growth of wild lupine and other flowering plants so critical to the Karner Blue Butterfly. As you travel the forests roads in late April to late May, you'll notice the beautiful wild blue lupine plants along roadsides and in recently cutover jack pine sites.

The Return of the Timber Wolf to Wisconsin's Central Forests

Richard P. Thiel
Sandhill Outdoor Skills Center
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

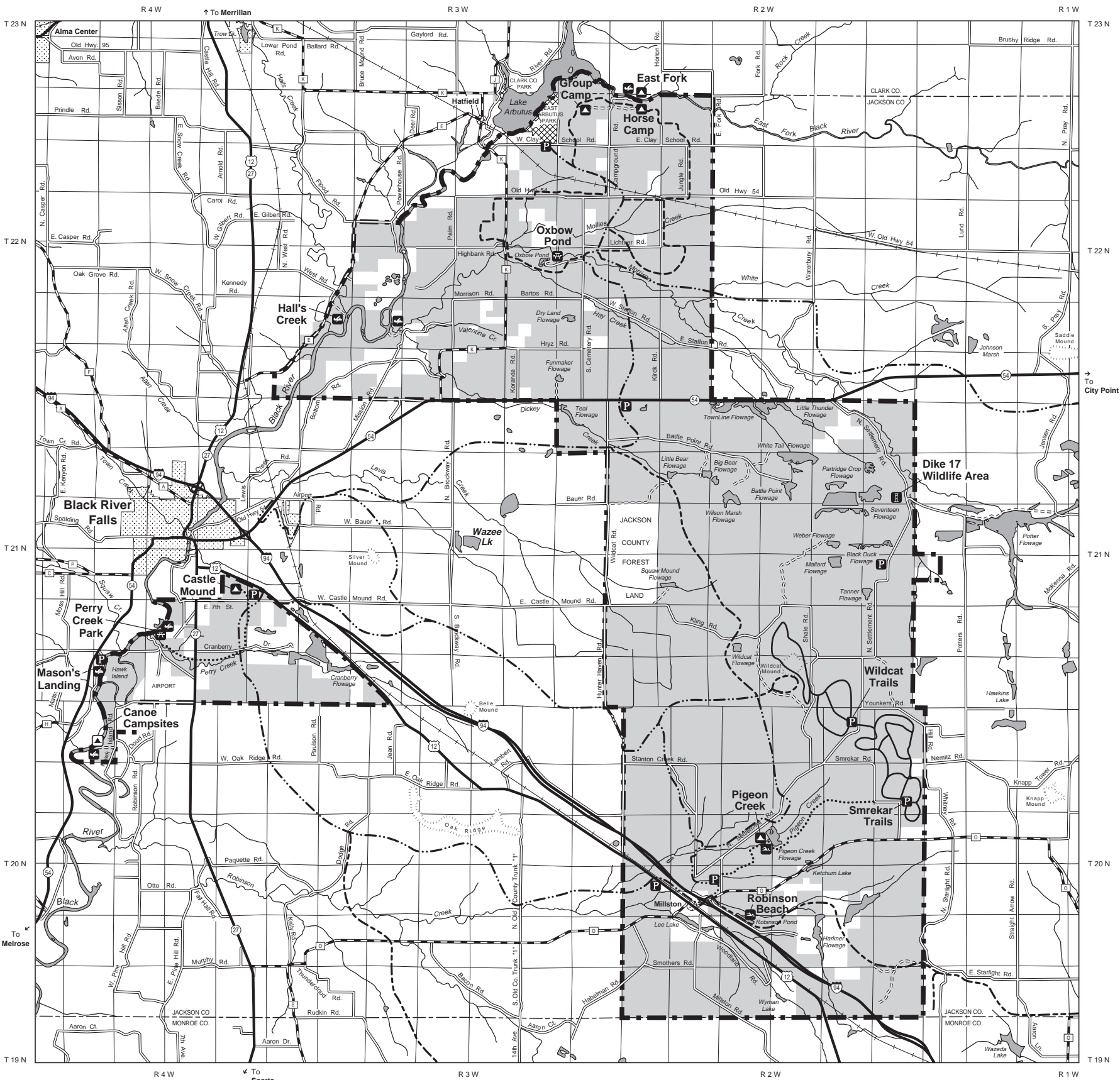


There they were, etched clearly in the fresh snowfall. Paw prints 4 1/2 inches long; the tracks of the animal's hind feet neatly placed into the spot where its front feet had been. "Wolf tracks, well I'll be...", I exclaimed to my assistant, Stephanie Stevenson, as I stared in disbelief at the textbook perfect imprints of a lone timber wolf's trail that crossed one of the innumerable tamarack swamps dotting the desolate landscape of eastern Jackson County in west-central Wisconsin. The date was November 30th, 1994. The timber wolf, known to science as *Canis lupus*, has had a rough time since Yankee settlers and European immigrants settled the region that eventually became the state of Wisconsin. Wolves live in families called packs. Packs usually consist of a breeding pair and their offspring. Wolves may live to be 10 to 12 years old, but are not sexually mature until they are 2 years old. Generally, one litter is born each year in the pack, and the month of April is when the breeding female ties up her den (which the whole pack helps dig), and delivers a litter of 5 or 6 pups.

Contrary to popular beliefs (and widespread opinion), wolves's diets do not include human beings. In the upper Great Lakes region, as elsewhere in the continent, this species focuses on members of the deer family. In Wisconsin wolves feed primarily on white-tailed deer. They supplement their diet with beaver, rabbits and other small animals. In the fall and throughout winter, many of the pack's yearling wolves get the "itch" to leave. They are approaching maturity, and in order to exert their independence they need to strike out on their own in search of unoccupied space, full of deer and beaver. They also search for spaces where there are few people. Many radio collared yearling wolves studied over the years have traveled 100, 200 and 300 miles in search of such spaces, and a companion wolf. This wanderlust is precisely how wolves returned to Wisconsin. Hounded, harassed and killed for bounties, the last of Wisconsin's original wolf population became extirpated in the late 1950's. By 1960, the only wolves remaining in the United States south of Canada, existed in the far northern forest of neighboring Minnesota, above Lake Superior. In 1973 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service placed the wolf on the federal *Endangered Species List*. This afforded the Minnesota wolf population some protection (but all to often laws don't prevent some people from killing things), enough protection that their population began rebounding. By the late 1970's wolves began reappearing in northern Wisconsin. By 1990, over 40 wolves were counted in Wisconsin, but these were all confined to remote forests in the north-central and northwestern reaches of the state. In the winter of 1994-95, two packs were discovered living in eastern Jackson County, part of Black River State Forest. A third pair established itself that year, undetected by DNR biologists, and all three groups raised pups in 1995. Wildlife enthusiasts greet the return of the wolf to western Wisconsin with guarded enthusiasm. It is a sign that, given a chance and the support and understanding of the public, endangered wildlife can stage a comeback. Visitors to the forest probably will not see a wolf. They are very secretive and usually avoid people. However, their tracks may be seen occasionally on area woods trails. If really fortunate, you may hear the wild howl of a wolf pack as evening descends and members of the pack gather together before sauntering out on their nightly rounds in search of prey.

Black River State Forest

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
January 2002



RECREATION INDEX													
	Family Camping	Winter Camping	Camp Units	Electric Sites	Swimming	Fishing	Shelter	Picnic	Drinking Water	Toilets	Total Trail Miles	Nature Trail miles	
Campgrounds:													
Canoe	X	2											
Castle Mound	X	X	35	6			X	X	X	X	1.5	3.0	1.5
East Fork	X		25		X		X	X	X	X	1.0		
East Fork (Group)	X	10					X	X	X	X		4.0	
East Fork (Horse)			12					X	X	X	35		
Pigeon Creek	X	X	38		X	X		X	X	X	1.5	5.2	
Trails:													
Smrekar								X	X	X	14		
Wildcat								X	X	X	10		
ATV & Motorcycle											34		
Snowmobile											51		
Day Use Areas:													
Oxbow					X			X	X	X			
Perry Creek								X	X			2	
Robinson Beach					X	X		X	X	X			

- Forest Boundary

State Forest Lands

Cities & Villages

Interstate, U.S. & State Highways

County Roads

Town Roads

Unimproved Roads
- Parking

Picnic Area

Swimming / Picnic Area

Campground / Picnic Area

Canoe Campsite

Canoe Landing

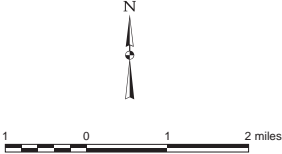
Observation Tower
- State or County - Snowmobile, Seasonal ATV & Motorcycle Trail

State or County - Snowmobile Only Trail

Hiking / Cross-Country Ski Trail

Horse Trail

Hiking / Mountain Bike Trail



Wild Turkeys in the Forest

The first release of wild turkeys in Jackson County was made in 1984 on the South Beaver Creek Wildlife Area. The first release of wild turkeys in the Zone 14 portion of Jackson County, which includes the Black River State Forest, was made in 1989. The first spring and fall hunts in Zone 14 occurred in 1990 and 1992 respectively.

The Black River State Forest composition is approximately one-third oak, one-third pine and one-third aspen and associated mixtures. The topography is mostly flat with oak ridge interspersed. Since introduction, the turkey population has increased dramatically in Zone 14. Winters have been mild and a favorable acorn crop has been available. Should a harsh winter

occur, turkeys could sustain heavy losses. In contrast to Zone 14, the best turkey habitat is found in the driftless area of Southwest Wisconsin. More fertile soils produce an abundant farm and nut crop, hilly terrain allows access to snow free, south slopes and numerous spring seeds are available for the birds.

In the spring season, 1995, 382 gobblers were harvested in Zone 14. 130 birds were harvested in the 1995 fall season. We can expect to see the wild turkey on the Black River State Forest as a permanent indigenous resident as long as present favorable forest management practices continue.